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FOREIGN DEPARTMENT



IN CHARGE OF
LAVINIA L. DOCK, R.N.

THE DEATH OF MISS NIGHTINGALE

At the great age of ninety years and three months the great woman to whom we owe our profession—one of the great salvation-bringing figures of history, has been called away. Her long life of usefulness has enclosed a variety and richness of service such as is given to few, and is now peacefully ended. The deeply stirring event is more adequately dealt with in our editorial pages.

All nurses will come in spirit to lay their offerings of thought on her last bed.

THE CRISIS AT ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S

WE wish to explain a little more fully the incident which has created and still causes intense indignation in the English nursing world. We are accustomed, in this country, to hold so tenaciously the tradition of choosing a superintendent of nurses from a school's own graduates; on the contrary, perhaps, quite the opposite custom is more usual with us. We have forgotten the hereditary principles, but in England, where tradition is strong, and where hospitals, as a result, develop more of a personal character, if we may use this term, and the feeling of pride in the traditions of the schools is a precious and cherished feeling, the mere fact that the Governors of St. Bartholomew's Hospital have appointed a matron from another school is, of itself, at once recognized by every English citizen as a bitter affront to the women who trained there and an insult to the dead matron. However, even this might have been less stinging were it not for the fact that all the incidents of the selection were offensive. The Governors published an advertisement of a kind which to us seems strikingly undignified; they set an age limit which is unreasonable, and obviously excluded the women of Bart's who are most distinguished at this moment for notable records as matrons; the interviews were conducted in a superficial way, and before the selection was publicly announced the young doctors knew who had been chosen.

There is evidently a reactionary party among the physicians in support of the subjugation of women;—one man remarked that it was not necessary for the matron to be a trained nurse;—all that was needed was to have someone in the office. It seems to us clear that the real issues at stake are, the principle of liberality of opinion, and the economic freedom of women who are self-supporting. We could freely accept the shorter training period of the London hospital if it did not exploit its nurses and sacrifice their education by sending them to private duty, thus underbidding self-supporting women;—if it did not prevent association on a free self-governing basis among its graduates; discourage their taking part in the organization movements of the country; maintain caste lines; decry solidarity and universal sisterhood, and cultivate every influence that tends to develop disunion.

This is the last desperate attack of the Hospitals Committee, inspired by Sydney Holland and Mr. Burdett, to keep nurses down in the grip of the employer's fist, for fear they may uprising into equality of citizenship and demand the rights of self-protection against commercialism and snobbery. This is the real secret of the succession to the matronship of St. Bartholomew's.

ITEMS

THE nurses of India have suffered a great loss in the death of Miss Thorpe, who was the secretary of the newly-formed Association of Nursing Superintendents of India, and also a member of the Matron's Council of Great Britain and Ireland. Miss Thorpe died by a most distressing accident, and her colleagues are therefore doubly grieved. She was one of the most active and devoted workers in the pioneering of Indian nursing and the upbuilding of education, and her place will not easily be filled. We offer our most sympathetic fellow-feeling to our Indian associates.

It makes us realize the cosmopolitanism of our work to see the questions for a nurse's examination printed in the Hindoo (?) language in the *Nursing Journal of India*.

THE PROGRESS OF WOMEN IN RUSSIA

MME. MIROVITCH, the brilliant correspondent of *Jus Suffragii*, sends the following interesting details of the recent congress on the white-slave traffic:

"Among the various congresses, which are breaking the monotony of our social life, the *1st Russian Convention of Prevention of White-*

Slave Traffic, 21-26 April (4-9 May) has been one of the most prominent. Social workers, men and women; doctors, lawyers, etc., joined this convention which was divided into three sections. The first examined the causes, which develop prostitution (economic slavery, alcoholism, absence of women's rights, etc.). The second section dwelt on measures taken by social workers against prostitution. The third section had to solve the great question: is state regulation of vice desirable or not? Great interest was excited by the 1st section where the most important question of the economic slavery of women was exposed in several reports, by General Leskevitch, by two factory girls, and others. A terrible picture of the economic conditions of girls, employed by planters in Crimea, was drawn by General Leskevitch. These white slaves are often made to work 18-20 hours a day for 5-6 shil. per month! In order to prevent them from sleeping, they are sometimes ordered to sing songs during night-hours. . . . The working women, by personal experience, described their life and the factory-surroundings, created as on purpose to encourage prostitution. . . . The interest, excited among the members of the Convention for the 1st section, was unfortunately shared by the police, whose mission here was to control all free discussion on political and economic topics. These authorities succeeded so well, that the work of the 1st section was twice stopped—for daring to point out the close connection between the political and economic subjection of the people and prostitution. More lucky was the third section which attracted the majority of the convention. Here also the speakers were several times interfered with by the police; but, at least, the work of the section was not stopped. The burning question of state regulation of vice was the chief object of the discussion of the 3rd section. Two different views were expressed on that question. Very few attempted openly to defend state regulation of vice, but some (several men-doctors and only one woman) declared that this institution should not be abolished at once; that a committee should first be organized for the purpose of investigating the whole question.

“But the great majority of the 3rd section, women especially, declared themselves against any compromise and referred to the following practical arguments: 1. The examination of women-prostitutes takes place very seldom, about once a week. 2. The symptoms of the disease are often discovered with great difficulty. 3. Syphilis can be cured, as a rule, after a long treatment only (during months and even years); while, in fact, the treatment is generally applied only during a few days. Still more impressive were the ethical arguments of the abolitionists: 1. The state regulation of prostitution, being an indirect sanction

of vice, has the worst possible effect on morals. 2. It degrades the human dignity of women. 3. State regulation is unjust because it affects the poor classes only, while the rich prostitutes are not subjected to examination.

"Finally, a resolution was moved by nine women's organizations, affirming the necessity of sending to the Government a petition on the immediate abolition of State regulation of vice. This resolution was enthusiastically adopted by the convention.

"In all questions, where women are the victims of law and custom, there is but one reform, which can stop the evil; and that is the political enfranchisement of women. This most important reform was energetically advocated in the Convention by Mmes. Tirkoff, Kalmanovitch and Mirovitch. Several men supported us, while a few others expressed the fear that the political emancipation of women would lower their morals to the level of those of men! . . .

"On the whole, the Convention had a good, stirring effect on all who took part in it, or followed its work."

THE Australasian nurses' estimate of nurses and doctors that follows is too amusing to overlook.

"The question has often been asked why American nurses take a more prominent part, both in speaking and writing, on questions relating to nursing and nurses than their Australian sisters. In the first place. American women are very versatile, both as speakers and writers; in the second, they are never afraid to express themselves freely, even when they might be criticized by members of the medical profession.

This is due chiefly to the totally different point of view from which the nurses in the large hospitals of different countries are taught to regard the honorable medical staff.

In American hospitals they are men, great men perhaps, but nevertheless only men; while in England, Germany, and Australia they are regarded as gods, and more often angry than just ones. This feeling is more or less fostered by matrons and sisters of hospitals, chiefly with the idea that it helps to maintain discipline and a high standard of work.

A probationer usually hears of something new every day that is likely to call forth the wrath of one of the great unknown beings, and dreads the day when she may have to go round the ward with one of them. If this happens when she is still a junior, she is so nervous that the ordeal is a nightmare; and the unfortunate honorary wonders why such an exceedingly stupid woman is allowed to go round with him, for of all stupid women a highly nervous one is perhaps the worst. In the early

days of the A.T.N.A., at a general meeting, nurses were asked if they had any objections or suggestions to make regarding certain matters under discussion. A nurse nervously stood up and made a few remarks. A very great man politely said, "Will you kindly repeat that statement. I don't quite follow you." The nurse collapsed, and was unable to say another word, in spite of his politeness. To her he was always the angry god.

I don't wish to criticize the point of view from which honorable medical officers are regarded in large hospitals by nurses, but merely to point out that the American one is less conducive to nervousness, and therefore the chief reason of the freedom of speech of the American nurse.—*The Australasian Nurses' Journal*.

THE graduates of the School for Nurses at the Salpêtrière have formed an *alumnæ* association, and have begun issuing an *alumnæ* journal called *La Soignante*. The journal, exclusively devoted to technical and professional topics, is edited by the members of the society. The first number is very attractive. The constitution and by-laws, printed on the back, are very like those of our *alumnæ* associations. We congratulate the young sisterhood and wish it well. The school has recently had the pleasure of a visit from the Queen of Bulgaria, who inspected everything from garret to cellar, and was greatly pleased by the many beautiful and modern features of the building and its adaptation to the work of teaching.

MISS VAN LANSCHOT HUBRECHT, secretary of the International Education Committee of which Mrs. Robb was chairman, has sent out the first questionnaire, relating to preliminary training. The answers received will be presented to the next congress at Cologne.

MISS WATERS' book, "Visiting Nursing in the United States," has been reviewed in *Kai Tiaki* for April, as well as in all the European journals.